



Early Childhood Center Parent Handbook



Strong Roots Begin Here

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Philosophy

Rochester School for the Deaf is a bilingual school for deaf and hard of hearing children using American Sign Language (ASL) and English. Our Early Childhood Center (ECC) programs provide students full and ongoing early access to both ASL and English in a language rich environment, promoting both incidental and planned learning. Students are provided with opportunities to acquire language based on their individual needs, recognizing the value of both ASL and English.

Students are provided with an accessible language at all times. Full group language activities are provided in ASL in order to develop a foundation of a visual language. Spoken English may be used in small group/individual settings with children who have access to a spoken language, only when appropriate. We believe the type of language-rich environment and the quality of language interaction to which children are exposed in the first five years of life greatly influence the outcomes of their adult lives.

Family ties and communication are the most important part of a young child's life. One of our main goals is to develop a strong partnership between our educational staff and families to foster respect, support, and empower the child to achieve key goals.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

RSD serves children who are deaf or hard of hearing and who seek access to a quality education where ASL and English are the languages of instruction. We offer programs designed to meet a diversity of student needs, including those who do not have access to sound, those who utilize digital hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and those with unique learning styles. The ECC admits students of any race, color, religion and national and ethnic origin. It is important that a positive and appropriate learning environment is established for each child. In an effort to create the best fit for your child and family, the ECC reserves the right to place children in classes by age and developmental level.

Language and Communication Policy

As a bilingual school, where ASL and English are the languages of instruction and community interaction, it is critical that all faculty and staff be vigilant in ensuring that communication is fully accessible to all of our students at all times. The expectation is that students will understand that the two languages, spoken English and ASL, are not used simultaneously and have two different sets of grammatical rules. At all times, language access is of paramount importance for students' cognitive, academic, social and emotional growth. Incidental learning plays an important role in the education and language development of children. Since all deaf and hard of hearing people access information visually, ASL is the only fully accessible language for all RSD students and other deaf and hard of hearing community members. Therefore, ASL is used in all general campus communication interactions. Students are then able to access conversations and are included in the incidental daily communication interactions of faculty and staff.

While you are on the RSD Campus, please sign to the best of your ability at all times.

Confidentiality

The ECC takes confidentiality very seriously and makes every effort to protect each family's privacy. Communications among staff and parents about children should be kept confidential at all times. The ECC recommends that conversations about a child, behavior, or incident should be conducted in private, away from the child and other members of the ECC community. Discussions in the hallways should be kept to a minimum. If a parent has a question or concern, we suggest that the parent(s) first contact the teacher via email or in person to arrange a time to discuss.

Social Media

Please do not share pictures or videos of other students or staff on social media (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, etc.), even if your child or children are visible in the same picture or video. Currently, the school is working on a policy and procedures regarding videotaping and photographs. If you are willing to share your photos/videos, please email them to Frank Kruppenbacher, the Director of Public Relations at fkruppenbacher@rsdeaf.org. The P.R. office will determine if they are appropriate to share via social media.

Communication

Communication between home and school is vital to a successful program.

School-Wide (Non-emergency) Information

The ECC office communicates with parents in a number of ways:

- Email
- Communication Book
- Letters
- Telephone
- Videophone
- Building Bridges e-News
- RSD Website
- Parent Night
- Notices sent home in children's backpacks

Classroom information

- Daily/weekly recaps from each class are sent via email to parents
- Please be sure to check the contents of your child's backpack each day so that you can find important notes, art projects, and so forth.

Parent-Teacher Communication

On-going communication between home and school is essential to the child's well-being. Parents are encouraged to talk regularly with teachers. Your teacher(s) may contact you via email, phone and/or text. It is the teacher's discretion whether he or she wants to use his/her personal phone for communication purposes. Your child's teachers will send home news and information on a regular basis; news that will explain activities, upcoming special events, items needed to be sent in, and other important things that you will need to know. This form of communication will help you to know the concepts and skills being worked on and the curriculum that is being taught. The ECC director will send home a monthly newsletter to keep you updated on events happening in the ECC.

Although parents and teachers may talk briefly at arrival and pick up times each day, teachers are unable to engage in extended conversations when they are responsible for children. To discuss an issue at length, it is recommended that you schedule a mutually convenient time for a meeting or a phone call. Teachers may make or return phone calls during their planning time or after school.

Please communicate with the teacher about any changes at home or within the family (i.e., parent on a trip, family member in the hospital, sick grandparent). These changes can affect your child's behavior, and it is useful for staff to be aware of these developments. Teachers always appreciate knowing about what happened at home and over the weekend. Also, these along with photos can make great conversation/language opportunities for the child. ECC staff will always respect your privacy.

If your family speaks a language other than ASL or English, translation services are available with prior notice.

Hours of Operation

The ECC is located in Denton Hall. The ECC houses both our FIRST (Family Instructional Resource and Service Team) and Preschool programs. Students gather in our playroom from the time they are dropped off here at school after 8:00 a.m. until their school day begins in the classroom at 8:25 a.m.

Our younger FIRST students who attend school on their assigned days are dismissed for home at 11:00 a.m. This schedule may fluctuate depending on the needs of our FIRST students. All of the students who attend full days are dismissed at 3:00 p.m.

Lunchtime for all of our preschool students is typically from 11:10 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. and generally playtime follows that. Students have morning and afternoon snack time here in school as well (snacks provided by families).

Some of our students nap in the afternoons (this is flexible based on the individual needs of the students). Please communicate with your child's teacher about your desires for napping as well as potty learning.

Attendance Procedures

Attendance

We believe that daily attendance is essential. A child should be in school every day for continuity of learning and to receive the most benefit from the program. Regular attendance is necessary to ensure your child's continued enrollment in the program and for the program's full funding.

If your child arrives to school late:

Please sign your child into school in the ECC Main Office, and provide a note explaining why your child is late to school and then take your child to his/her classroom teacher.

If your child will be leaving school early:

Please send in a note to his/her classroom teacher stating the time and who will be picking up your child. If it is not the parent/guardian, we need to have the complete name of the person and contact information of who is, in case the person does not show up or another problem arises. Your child's health, safety, and well-being are important to us. When you or the assigned person arrives to pick up your child, please first go to the ECC Main Office to sign out the child, where they will be asked to show their license or state identification, before heading to the classroom.

If your child is sick at school:

It is our goal to protect our students from illness so that they can benefit from our program. In order to achieve this goal, we also need to keep our staff members and other students healthy. To ensure the continued good health of everyone at our program, we ask that parents assist by keeping sick children at home.

As we know, the younger your child, the more difficult it is to keep the spread of germs down. Some examples are hand-to-face contact, mouthing of toys, uncontrolled nasal discharge, uncovered sneezing and coughing, etc.

If your child is showing signs of illness (hard coughing, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever), please keep them at home. It is RSD policy that your child be free of vomiting, diarrhea and fever for 24 hours before returning to school.

If your child will be absent from school, the following process must be followed:

1. Parent/Guardian must call or e-mail the Student Health Center before 8:30 a.m. on the day their child will not be in school. The phone numbers for the Student Health Center are:
(585) 336-5841 (V)
(585) 286-2814 (VP)
bkindelberger@rsdeaf.org
2. On the day the student returns to school he/she must bring a note from the parent/guardian containing the school dates missed and the reason for the absence. You may also send an e-mail.
3. A student's absence can only be considered an excused absence when written documentation is received from the parent/guardian.
4. If a student returns without a written note, it is the parent's responsibility to provide written documentation within 3 days of the return or the entire absence remains on the student's attendance record as an unexcused absence.

5. For early dismissal, you may use the supplied gold “*Excused Absence Alternate Pick Up*” forms or email a written excuse or request.
6. If a child arrives at school after 8:25 a.m., that child must be marked “tardy” on our attendance records. The child must be signed in with the ECC Main Office.
7. If your child becomes sick during the school day and needs to be sent home, we will contact the parent/guardian at the number(s) provided. We ask that you come to pick your child up as soon as possible and within 90 minutes from when we first contact you.

Cab/Van/Bus Transportation

RSD is responsible for transporting students under 3 years of age. We contract with Apple Transportation to provide transportation our students under the age of 3. Pat Incini, the Operations Manager for Apple Transportation, may be reached via voice or text at (585) 415-9589 or contact the Dispatcher at (585) 427-7330.

Home school districts are responsible for transporting children 3 years of age or older. Your home district should be in contact with you directly to arrange transportation. If you encounter any problems or delays, please contact your home district.

Should you pick up your child early, or if your child is sick, it is your responsibility to contact Apple Transportation or your district (not the driver) to let them know your son/daughter will not be riding the cab/van/bus.

Visiting the ECC

You are more than welcome to visit your child and our program with prior notice but please limit your visit to 30 minutes only. You can take pictures and videos of your child; however, please do not post any photos/videos that contain anyone other than your child. Please see the “Social Media” section for more specifics.

Lunch and Snack

Students (ages 3 and up) may bring or buy their lunch. They may also purchase milk and/or ice cream. Free and reduced lunches are available to those children who qualify. Forms for these are mailed out during the summer from our Business Office. For daily snack time, your child’s teacher will request healthy snacks (provided by families). Anything shared with others in the class must be store bought and pre-packaged. For preschoolers, you can decide on a daily basis whether your child will buy or bring his lunch. Lunches are billed to you on a monthly basis. Menus can be found on the school website.

Dressing for School

Children are involved in different kinds of exciting and sometimes messy activities. Dress your child in comfortable clothes and shoes. Open toe shoes or sandals are not recommended since children will be involved in activities that may be physically active such as running and climbing.

As a precaution, the ECC asks you to provide one extra set of clothing to be kept at school in case of mishaps. Staff are not responsible for washing soiled clothing; instead, such items will be rinsed and placed in plastic bags for your child to take home.

Toys/Books

Due to the possibility of loss and damage, students may only bring one toy (stuffed or soft) and a book or two from home. Toys can also be unsafe on the van/bus. Please help your child understand why it is not wise to bring toys or other personal items from home to school. If students have transitional items (“security blankets”, “lovies”, etc.) that may help them adjust to change or separation, these may be used at school. Because these special items are particularly important to children, they should be clearly identified with the child’s name.

Names and Labels

All clothing, backpacks, school supplies, and lunch boxes should be labeled with your child’s first and last name. Please help them (and us) by labeling everything. Remember to use a permanent marker!

Birthdays/Cultural Events

As a school, we strive to recognize the diversity and inclusion of all staff and students on campus. We admit students of any race, color, religion, and national and ethnic origin. We extend all rights, privileges, programs, and activities and do not discriminate in the administration of the school’s educational and admission policies.

Birthdays for most people are a very important milestone and we want to celebrate them with your children. Your child’s teacher has many different activities to make it a special day for your child so please feel free to discuss this with him/her. Please contact the teacher, at least 48 hours in advance to set up a time that you can come into school to help with an event. If you choose to celebrate with a food product, please make sure it is healthy and meets all nutritional requirements for **all** of the students in the classroom. Only store bought and unopened pre-packaged foods may be brought into the classroom.

RSD is transitioning to the anti-bias approach like many schools have already. That means we are taking time to learn about holidays and celebrations from all cultures. Our students are very diverse and we want to respect all cultures/traditions. We also invite families to share their traditions with the ECC community.

Field Trips

Field trips are an integral part of the preschool curriculum, providing rich learning opportunities through shared experiences while exploring the many resources of our community that might be tied to classroom themes. Parent participation is not only welcome but encouraged. As a chaperone, you have the opportunity to share one-on-one in your child’s experience as well as to support our teaching staff in supervising the group. While we put an emphasis on family involvement, field trips are not an appropriate setting for siblings to attend.

We consider all adults on a trip chaperones, and as such you should be available to provide support during our outings; therefore, we ask that you refrain from using your cell phone or other electronic device while on our field trips or attending other school functions. Your child’s teacher will inform you of an upcoming field trip and have you sign a permission slip for your child to attend the field trip. If the permission slip is not signed and returned, your child will not be able to the trip.

Potty Training

Potty Training often begins sometime during the toddler school year. We do not begin the toilet training process until children begin showing signs of interest and signs that their bodies are ready. Please inform your child's teacher if you are going to begin the potty training process. Your child will need extra clothing (underwear, pants, socks, shoes) during this time. Families must provide diapers and wipes for children who are not yet potty trained.

Updates to Parent/Guardian Contact Information

Parents must notify their present home school district if they move and also register in the new school district to set up transportation and CPSE/CSE meetings.

If any changes in address, phone numbers, or emergency contacts occur, please notify Brenda Jamalkowski in the ECC Main Office.

Program Curriculum

We offer a child-centered and developmentally appropriate program for children from birth to age five. To make sure that we have a quality program that promotes your child's development, we use the play-based learning framework of *Creative Curriculum*. *Creative Curriculum* is specifically designed for programs serving children from birth to age five, and aligns with New York State Early Learning Standards.

Our teachers incorporate their own experiences, as well as the children's interests, to adapt the curriculum to be unique to each ECC class. Classroom observations and assessments become important tools for the teachers to communicate with parents.

The philosophy behind our curriculum is that young children learn best by doing. They benefit from active thinking and experimenting to find out how things work and to learn firsthand about the world we live in. We want children to become independent, confident, curious learners who can work well with others. We do this by creating purposeful and productive play experiences that help children grow in all of the following areas of development: Cognitive, Language, Physical and Socio-Emotional. The ECC strives to provide positive behavior interventions and support to create an optimal learning environment for our students.

Our play-based curriculum offers children many opportunities for positive interactions with other children and adults. *Creative Curriculum for Preschool* provides guidance for teachers in the content areas of literacy, math, science, social skills, and the arts. Through the activities we plan and the way we organize the classroom, select toys and materials, plan the daily schedule and talk with children, we seek to accomplish the goals of our curriculum to help your child achieve success in school and later in life.

New research on the brain and on learning shows how important the early years are in a child's learning and development. What happens in the ECC matters a lot. And what you do at home is even more important. For this reason, we will work together as partners to help your child achieve success in school and life.

Daily Activities

These are some examples of daily activities and routines that take place at the ECC.

Morning Meetings

Morning meetings are often conducted to review the plans for the day, introduce any new materials added to interest areas, discuss attendance and class jobs; invite children to share news; do ASL rhymes, etc.

Storytelling

Reading with children is the best way to promote language and literacy skills. We use a variety of genres, including classic tales, contemporary books, and original nonfiction books especially to complement our *Creative Curriculum* themes as well as children's interests. We often read our stories again and again as well as make the reading experiences interactive. There are ASL stories available on the RSD Website under the Early Childhood Programs tab.

Play

Play is very important here in the ECC. It is the natural way children learn, develop, and grow as individuals.

Anticipate your child playing outside for a period of time every day. When the weather is reasonable, your child will most likely be going outside to play. For this reason, it is very important that you make sure your child has the appropriate shoes. Sneakers are preferred, but if other shoes are worn, they must be safe for climbing, running, etc. Flip flops and crocs are not recommended. You may send in sneakers to be left in your child's cubby. Students also need socks to play on the mat in our playroom. If a child comes to school without appropriate footwear, he/she may not be able to participate in playtime and Physical Education class.

Centers/Investigations/Choice Time

This is a time for children to choose an area that they would like to explore in their classroom. The areas will vary but often available will be: Blocks, Dramatic Play, Toys and Games, Sand and Water, Library, Art, and so on. When children are finished working in one area, they are free to move to another. Children learn many different concepts and skills from choice time.

ASL/English Literacy

Language and communication activities are a priority in the ECC. Having conversations and engaging with our students is a primary way of developing their languages. We want your child(ren) to be proficient in both languages as it is critical to their academic success. Fostering expression and understanding, as well as modeling both ASL and English, are essential parts of our program. Through the utilization of conversation, literature such as children's books, storytelling, class-made books, Show-and-Tell, ASL rhymes, and an array of other child-centered activities, students experience a language-rich environment. Since our students are visual learners, technology - integral and accessible - should be a part of every bilingual classroom. Our students need mastery of both general technology and visually-oriented technology in order to maximize learning potential. For this, we promote ASL text in our learning environments. This setting helps children develop proficiency with using language to receive and to express themselves.

Sharing books with young children is an important part of our routine. Reading is taught through literature-based lessons and experiential learning. The special language of the printed word is best introduced to children by reading to them from a variety of sources and genres. The desire to read is nurtured and increased when children see the necessity and joy of reading.

The primary goal of early literacy experiences is to build children's interest in reading and writing-related activities and learning in general.

ASL Rhymes

We see ASL Rhymes as an important part of our curriculum. ASL Rhymes are based on patterns, repetitions and structures. Many of these tie with our classroom interests, numbers, vocabulary and concepts. They also help tie-in with transitions from one activity to another.

Art Projects

In the area of art, teachers emphasize the process rather than the finished product. Process art is a way for children to express themselves where the focus is not on the finished product, but on the process of creating. During Art students create, have exposure to sensory experiences, develop fine motor skills, and learn to follow directions.

Speech/Language

All students receive individual, as well as group, Speech/Language sessions delivered by our certified speech/language teachers. These sessions are related to the children's IFSP/IEP goals and reinforce concepts and vocabulary learned in the classroom. Skills range from eye contact, attention, clear sign formation, fingerspelling, mouth movements, language and use of voice, listening, speech reading, speaking or oral motor (when appropriate).

Specials

The following specials are typically offered to our Preschool students. All except for Music and MSSC classes take place in Westervelt Hall, the K-12 building.

- Physical Education (including swimming)
- Library
- Art
- Music
- Multi-Sensory Sound Class (MSSC)
- American Sign Language

Student Progress

Parents are always welcome to come to school to talk with our staff; appointments are encouraged. Parents are also welcome to observe their child in class/session for up to 30 minutes. Please make sure to contact your child's teacher ahead of time and go directly to the ECC Main Office to sign in and receive a visitor badge.

IFSPs (FIRST program) will be reviewed every six months. IEPs via the CPSE/CSE process will be reviewed annually. In addition to these, for preschool, IEPs will be evaluated and reviewed quarterly, in alignment with the marking periods outlined in the school calendar.

For more school and updated calendar information, please check the monthly calendar sent home as well as our school website, www.rsdeaf.org.

General School Information

RSD - Denton Hall
Early Childhood Programs
1545 St. Paul Street
Rochester, NY 14621

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